

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Nancy Nydam

June 27 Is National HIV Testing Day

Treatment as Prevention - Help Stop the Spread of HIV

ATLANTA – More than 1.1 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV, but one out of every five of them doesn't know it. Thursday, June 27, is National HIV Testing Day. The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is teaming up with its national partner Greater Than Aids, and health departments around the state to offer **free** HIV testing to Georgians.

HIV testing is a critical part of stopping the spread of the virus and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says testing should be a part of routine health care. A panel of doctors and scientists recently recommended that all Americans between age 15 and 65 get tested for HIV, regardless of their risk of infection. HIV testing would help increase detection and decrease the stigma associated with HIV and being tested, according to the panel. HIV testing during pregnancy also is important because antiviral therapy can improve the mother's health and greatly lower the chance that an HIV-infected pregnant woman will pass HIV to her infant before, during or after birth.

Testing is a critical part of the fight against HIV in Georgia. At the end of 2010, there were 18,535 Georgians living with HIV and 23,451 with AIDS. The state ranks sixth in the nation for the number of AIDS cases reported through the end of 2009.

"Getting Georgians tested and linking HIV-positive patients with treatment is essential to reducing HIV transmission in Georgia," said Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health. "An HIV-positive person is 96 percent less-likely to pass the virus to others if they're adhering to an appropriate treatment regimen."

If people test positive for HIV, they can take care of themselves. Proper medical care and treatment help people with HIV live longer healthier lives and reduces the chances of passing HIV to others. People who test negative for HIV can take steps to stay



negative by not having unprotected sex or engaging in other risky behavior like needle sharing.

Georgians throughout the state can get free HIV tests at select Walgreens and county health departments, and other Greater Than AIDS partners on Thursday, June 27, and in some cases through the weekend. For more information about National HIV Testing Day and a list of free HIV testing locations, visit www.dph.ga.gov or <http://greaterthan.org/>

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About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency in preventing disease, injury and disability; promoting health and well-being; and preparing for and responding to disasters from a health perspective. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years of consolidation with other departments. At the state level, DPH functions through numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices. Locally, DPH funds and collaborates with Georgia's 159 county health departments and 18 public health districts. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH's main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records, and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information about DPH, visit www.dph.ga.gov